

The continued meeting of the Council of the Town of Altavista was held in the Council Chambers of the J.R. Burgess Municipal Building, 510 Seventh Street, on September 15, 2014 at 4:00 p.m.

Council members

present: Mr. Mike Mattox
Mrs. Beverley Dalton
Mr. Charles Edwards
Mr. Bill Ferguson
Mr. Timothy George
Mr. Jay Higginbotham

Council members

absent: Mr. Tracy Emerson

Also present: Mr. J. Waverly Coggsdale, III, Town Manager
Mr. David Garrett, Public Works/Utilities Director
Mrs. Mary Hall, Administration

Mayor Mattox called the continued meeting to order and presided.

WWTP Emergency Overflow Pond PCB Remediation

Mayor Mattox advised of a letter received from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) inquiring of Council's desire to remain in the voluntary remediation program (VRP). The letter is requesting written correspondence with an update of acceptable VRP activities and an expected date of the next submittal demonstrating completion of this remedial project.

Mr. George asked what DEQ expects the Town to do.

Mr. Higginbotham advised they are expecting the Town to show progress.

Mr. George asked if DEQ has a proposal.

Mr. Higginbotham stated the DEQ wants the Town to "dig and haul" and won't contribute any money.

Mayor Mattox asked if Council was interested in "dig and haul". No one was interested.

Mr. Higginbotham advised of a meeting he attended, Mr. Durwood Willis, DEQ, commented the only way he would be satisfied was to "dig and haul".

Mrs. Dalton felt the question can't be specified. She felt the DEQ wants progress because that's the purpose of the VRP. She noted for them to request a progress report six months after Council suggested to them in a previous schedule that they would be contacting them isn't farfetched.

Mr. George asked what the advantage is to being in the VRP.

Mayor Mattox stated by being in the VRP the town is able to control their clean up; the DEQ suggests "dig and haul". If the PCBs are cleaned up to 50 parts per one million, the town earns a letter of closure; with this Altavista can no longer be held accountable for PCBs in the river.

Mr. Higginbotham stated Council met with Mr. Steve Rock, of the EPA who said we don't want you to "dig and haul". The EPA funds DEQ. They said they would prefer the PCBs be treated on site. Mr. Higginbotham noted in a letter received from DEQ, the Town doesn't have to do anything but from a public safety standpoint Council wanted to look for economical methods that could help resolve the PCB problem. He noted DEQ is not aware of Dr. Sowers and his

report and Dr. Lou Licht and his reports. Mr. Higginbotham suggested these two do summary letters as well as the Town and submit to DEQ.

Mrs. Dalton suggested that Council honor the request of DEQ advising of the parties that have had a hand in the remediation process.

Mr. Edwards agreed and felt more importantly, the representative of DEQ, Mr. Mead Anderson stated they had no further authority beyond the VRP. Mr. Steve Rock was at the same meeting and stated they had larger fish to fry and they liked what the Town was doing. He felt Mr. Rock would tell Council to continue on the road they are traveling because PCBs are a worldwide problem and a better solution is needed. He stated “dig and haul” and Ex-situ thermal desorption are not appropriate and would be costly to Altavista taxpayers. Mr. Edwards stated he has spent a lot of time reviewing alternatives and felt the folks at Gay and Neel has 5% of the knowledge of the people they have been dealing with regards to PCB remediation. The plan is that microbes will destroy the PCBs.

Mr. Ferguson was in agreement that a letter should be sent to DEQ explaining what the Town has done thus far.

Mr. Higginbotham offered to help formulate a draft letter to DEQ.

Mr. Coggsdale stated from the conversation Council does want to stay in the VRP.

Council agreed they wanted to stay in the VRP.

Mr. Coggsdale mentioned the letter from the EPA is requesting a response within 30 days with an update of the acceptable VRP activities.

Mrs. Dalton advised the letter should include what has been done thus far and allow the EPA to advise if these are acceptable activities; Dr. Licht and Dr. Sowers should be contacted and asked to defend their projects along with others who have worked on this project. Mrs. Dalton stated it would likely take money to compensate Dr. Licht and Dr. Sowers to defend their work.

Mr. Higginbotham felt the letter should also advise in 18 to 24 months Council will be able to update the DEQ further. He also suggested advising of the proposed Dr. Larry Robinson grant that the Town is taking part in and should be hearing from in early fall or spring.

Mrs. Dalton noted in the letter they specifically ask for the expected date of the next submittal demonstrating completion of this remedial project.

Mr. Coggsdale stated it is important to know how the letter should be answered.

Mrs. Dalton asked if it would be helpful if the letter was set up with a timeline to include visits from the Dr. Licht, Dr. Sowers and others that have been there. She also suggested listing in the timeline committee meetings where PCBs were on the agenda which shows due diligence, good faith effort and how much time Council has spent on this matter; including the workshop at the Train Station.

Mr. Higginbotham suggested including the fact that red mulberry bushes are being planted as well which destroy PCBs.

Mrs. Dalton stated the mulberry bushes might be included in the “what’s next” portion of the letter. At the end of the letter, we want them to know what has been done, that nothing has been missed and that the DEQ understands Council’s intent.

Mr. Higginbotham asked if Dr. Licht would be hired and referred to Dr. Sowers and the Sedmites and asked if he should be contacted for an estimate of what Phase 2 would cost.

Mrs. Dalton stated she would hate to “throw him away”, Council seems to be heading towards phyto because that seems to be the most natural way of removing the PCBs but doesn’t want to separate from Dr. Sowers and his possibilities.

Mr. Coggsdale stated he would look back and work on what Council said they would do during that timeframe, recap what has been done, and attach the printed results.

Mrs. Dalton asked if Dr. Licht and Dr. Sowers should craft those responses. She felt Council could expend some money to cover the cost. She stated this letter needs to be straight forward and it will either be acceptable or not. She felt in the long run these PCBs are the exception to the rule for a lot of reasons because they are of no harm to anyone and haven’t been for 30 years, they are stable and aren’t going anywhere anytime soon and this is an opportunity to scientifically research the solution for the future.

Mr. Edwards felt the point should be made that Council does not have the alternative to go back to the industry from which is believed the PCBs came; these costs are on the taxpayers’ back.

Mr. George questioned comments in one of the letters where DEQ says they don’t approve of what’s being done and don’t understand it. They don’t like the roots penetrating the clay liner.

Mr. Higginbotham acknowledged this comment and felt Mr. Coggsdale should address these comments in his letter.

A motion was made by Mrs. Dalton, seconded by Mr. Edwards, to appropriate up to \$5,000 towards Dr. Sowers and Dr. Licht asking them to draft letters to be sent to the Department of Environmental Quality.

Motion carried:

VOTE:	Mr. Michael Mattox	Yes
	Mrs. Beverley Dalton	Yes
	Mr. Charles Edwards	Yes
	Mr. Bill Ferguson	Yes
	Mr. Timothy George	Yes
	Mr. Jay Higginbotham	Yes

Gay and Neel, Inc

Mr. Coggsdale presented Council members with a proposal for Professional Services from Gay and Neel, Inc.

A motion was made by Mrs. Dalton, seconded by Mr. Ferguson, to engage Gay and Neel’s professional services in an amount of \$3,420.

Mr. Higginbotham stated Council is looking at hiring a civil engineering group to turn around and hire an environmental firm to critique Dr. Sowers, Dr. Licht, Larry Robertson and Gary Booth. He didn’t feel this was right.

Mayor Mattox stated this was an opportunity to investigate other sources for remediation.

Mr. Higginbotham referred to Mirimichi Green’s report of April 2013 that summarizes the best available technology. He noted since 2007, Council has been fighting “dig and haul”. The microbes are out there and are working. He felt

Council was working with the best experts in the country and yet hiring a local civil engineering firm.

Mayor Mattox felt Gay and Neel, Inc., could validate what has been done thus far and give a valid argument for the DEQ.

Mr. Higginbotham asked how Council could afford to pay somebody to analyze Dr. Sowers and Dr. Licht.

Mayor Mattox responded Council is paying \$5,000 for letters and asking for \$3,420 for an evaluation.

Mr. Higginbotham felt this evaluation was premature.

Mayor Mattox disagreed because the DEQ is requesting validation, requesting information and alternatives.

Mr. Edwards noted it is important for the information to be correct and asked why someone would be hired that refers to items that were never part of the plan.

Mayor Mattox asked staff, Mr. Bond and Mr. Garrett, what was their recommendation.

Mr. Bond stated he was completely uncomfortable making a recommendation.

Mr. Coggsdale stated the town needs an expert, someone that's looking out for the town's best interest; someone that can assess any and all information and if this is not the group, he asked that the group be found.

Mayor Mattox asked Mr. Coggsdale if he was comfortable with this group.

Mr. Coggsdale answered affirmatively. He stated Mr. Higginbotham had some valid points and \$3,400 does not seem like a lot. He is trying to provide Council with expertise to help them down the path.

Mr. George asked if there was a ball park figure of how much has been spent thus far.

Mr. Coggsdale responded at least \$100,000 over 12 years.

Mr. George stated he didn't see spending \$3,400 being out of the rim of things if it brought more knowledge about PCBs.

Mr. Higginbotham stated he was a Civil Engineer and this is not civil engineering work it is environmental work and Gay and Neel is the wrong firm to analyze this.

Mr. Edwards stated he paid the Town of Altavista approximately \$40,000 in taxes in 2013 and was embarrassed that Council would be contracting with this firm.

Motion carried:

VOTE:	Mr. Michael Mattox	Yes
	Mrs. Beverley Dalton	Yes
	Mr. Charles Edwards	No
	Mr. Bill Ferguson	Yes
	Mr. Timothy George	Yes
	Mr. Jay Higginbotham	No

Mayor Mattox asked if there was anything else to come before Council.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:56 p.m.

Michael E. Mattox, Mayor

J. Waverly Coggsdale, III, Clerk